



Lost Lore:



Ecology of The Troll



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Genesis of the Trolls

"The troll-folk were once men — like us," whispered the blind man, leaning close to the young warrior's face. His short white beard framed a tanned, wrinkled face and his eyes were clouded over. His voice was strong with conviction.

"Enough of this nonsense!" exclaimed Brando. "Stop listening to that old man, Marios, he spins tales for drinks."

"I tell you, they were men! Back in the ancient times! Our wizard Zanthracor the Unbound read about it in the tomb scrolls we found forty winters ago..."

"Rubbish! Tavern tales! Let's get out of here Marios. We're to meet up with the militia at the standing stones in an hour. We're off to fight REAL trolls, not listen to stories from some old drunk!"

"He's not just some old drunk," Marios responded finally.

"This man fought in the Hill Wars. He stood with warlords when the giants and trolls assaulted the old stronghold. He's a great warrior!"

"Aye, he's one of the troll-slayers," grumbled the tavern keeper. "Show them your scars, Old One. He stood with the lads of the valley and the lords of the high king when the troll hordes came out of the hills many years ago. Show the lads your scars!"

Modestly, the old warrior lifted up his shirt. Five-fingered lines clawed diagonally across his chest from shoulder to side. The scarred furrows in his aged flesh signified a creature of monstrous size and humanoid shape and form. Tracing the scars with his stretched hand, "He charged at me in a rage and ripped clean through my leather armor. If it weren't for my comrade, Sorrick, who had his spear readied next to me, I would have been finished off when he came down with his other hand." Pulling back down his tunic, he said soberly. "If you would do battle with the Troll-folk, you will need to know all about them: how they live, where they come from, how they fight."

Origins

Long ago, when man had but freshly grasped the tools of civilization, Eirik, a mighty warlord of the North, ordered the sorcerer, Inghard, to appear before him.

A red-shrouded figure with the face of a child and the emaciated body of a humanoid stick insect shuffled into the lord's court. His hands were encased in long tight-fitting leather gloves hidden in the folds of his robes. As he approached the throne, he withdrew two bony, five-fingered appendages and thrust them upward in salute to the brooding barbaric ruler on his throne.

"You summoned me, my lord?" His gleeful smile and gurgling child's voice shot waves of unease through the hearts of the court.

"Dark sorcerer, I would that you make my warriors invincible in battle, unable to die when they are brought low by the blows of my enemies."

"All men die, Your Excellency. Mortality is the fate of all who are born of woman."

"You will find a way!" he bellowed. "We must be victorious or perish in these endless wars that plague us."

"As you wish, Great Lord." Bowing deeply Inghard glided backwards suddenly and unnaturally through the audience hall. The great doors flew open as the bizarre sorcerer disappeared into a billowing cloud of fowl brown smoke.

Rumors whispered that Inghard was fathered by a demon on his mother, a sorceress; that rather than being born in the usual way he tore his way through his mother's abdomen and was raised by monsters in the desert. Whatever the case, he lived alone in a desolate ruin practicing strange arcane arts.

One day, Eirik pursued the city-king Og through that same cyclopean ruin, slaying him atop a large, toppled monument. His enemy's blood sizzled as it spilled upon the strange grey stone, sending up ochre smoke that tortured Eirik's eyes and nostrils.

A strangely cloaked figure emerged from behind a crumbled wall. "Hail Mighty Lord! Your coming has been prophesied by the Ancient Ones! You are destined for greatness! Behold your story carved of old on the monument..."

Gazing down on the fallen obelisk the warlord beheld the faded depictions and unintelligible writing carved in stone with astonishment, for the story depicted there was his own life, including the climactic battle with the king he had just slain. The rest was all but crumbled to pieces in the sand save for one fragment showing the same hero (himself) being crowned in majesty.

"I am Inghard, master of the arcane arts and your humble servant. I pray you, accept me into your service that I may witness your rise to power and bask in your greatness."

For five years Inghard had served the Warlord Eirik as his court wizard.

At Eirik's command, he began his experiments.

Inghard found amongst the creatures of the world one that could not die — the hydra — for its body regenerated cuts and blows, and its heads re-grew when they were cut off. Several hydras were captured. Experiments were conducted on still living specimens to study the nature of the supernatural restoration.

In time, Inghard discovered within the hydra a singular organ shaped vaguely like a human hand. It produced an adrenaline-like hormone that caused instant, miraculous healing. He made several attempts to synthesize the substance into an elixir, but to no avail. Consequently, he sought out forbidden lore and harnessed dark magic to graft portions of the organ onto the bodies of living creatures. The unearthing of these dark secrets of flesh-to-flesh amalgamation damned the twisted soul of Inghard, but in time he mastered them, and bent them to his will.

He experimented first on tortoises, then sheep and cattle, and finally pigs. The results were promising but he still needed human subjects to complete his mission to produce immortal warriors for his lord. Though there were ample slaves available from war captives, the Slave Consortium was hard pressed to provide sufficient test subjects for Inghard. Many perished under his surgical knife or from complications that followed.

Initially children were preferred, being easy to mislead and manipulate, but he discovered they couldn't take the strains the monstrous grafts wore upon their immature bodies. Worse, the effect on adolescent metabolisms caused older children to enlarge at an alarming rate and become savagely aggressive. After many failures, he finally was able to implant a "bi-liver" (as he called the regenerative organ) within an adult male enabling the man to heal from mortal wounds with great speed. He then acquired a series of human females, for he foresaw the need to provide a breeding population. However, there were unforeseen complications during menstruation within his early subjects: the bi-livers would not permit natural monthly blood flow, which resulted in grotesque abdominal swelling and requiring aggressive application of giant leeches and steel catheters to siphon excessive fluid. It took scores of horrific failures before Inghard produced a human female whose body fully accepted the bi-liver implant. Her name was Aslaug, a woman from the savage tribes, acquainted with hardship and strong of body and spirit. By plunging a spear into her side he could demonstrate how she would fall as though dead, but then rise up again — unslain!

He told the fateful future king, "I need only volunteers from your army to produce your unkillable warriors Your Excellency..."

In time, two warriors from Eirik's personal guard were implanted

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with the bi-liver. Shirtless and armed only with spears, each was pitted against another warrior in a fight to the death to test the dark sorcerer's work. The results were a complete success and soon dozens and then hundreds of warriors received bi-liver implants. Now known as The Undying, they won battle after battle for their master Eirik, making him the mightiest warlord in The Riverlands. Aslaug could be seen at the forefront of their lines in every conflict, the lone immortal female warrior.

The story of The Undying would be brief, however. As time went on, they became more and more savage and bloodthirsty. They consumed enormous amounts of food and wine and if they could not get it fast enough, they would sate their appetites on any living thing in the area including, finally, battlefield dead. They then came to be known as the *fleischtrollen* or those who hunt after flesh. As they regenerated lost limbs and organs, they acquired superior strength and grew larger. Their skin grew thick and rubbery, their hands grew iron-hard claws and their jaws grew to monstrous proportions. Inevitably, they were marked for destruction as they become more and more out of control. Eirik staged an ambush and many were slain by fire and magic. The casualties were high. Dispersed gangs of *fleishtrollen* escaped into the wilderness.

At last, a powerful wizard in the employ of Eirik's chief rival, an ancient and decrepit man named Torbjorn, had had enough. Torbjorn consulted the same dark arts consulted by Inghard, damning his soul in the process. Torbjorn's research uncovered a weakness, and he devised a mighty spell to exploit it. As the wizard cast his epic ritual to destroy the Undying, Inghard interfered. The result was cataclysmic; rocks for miles around shattered, and snowcaps atop the mountains melted causing devastating floods. In the end Torbjorn lay dead, his body shattered like the rocks upon which he stood. Rather than destroying the Undying, the ritual threw all the abominations into the Ginnungagap. There, the foul creatures mixed with other Jötnar, crossbreeding. The result is the modern-day troll.

The story of The Undying became legend, which turned into fable, and became lost in all but a few rare accounts or obscure footnotes. Eirik and Inghard disappear from historical accounts at this point and the profane knowledge of bi-liver grafts has likewise vanished without trace.

Physiology

Trolls have been described as "fat" and "lumbering" as well as "emaciatedly thin." Are these variations within the species? Interestingly, no. If one sees a fat and bloated troll passing by and later that day another looking rail-thin, it might well be the very same troll. Trolls have been described as having a "rubbery hide" and this is no idle observation. The hide of a troll is indeed very elastic, allowing it to rapidly accommodate extreme changes in its girth. The regeneration process requires enormous amounts of energy. A troll may start out a combat heavy in circumference and end it much shrunk as regeneration consumes its fat stores. This accounts for the troll's legendary appetite. Trolls have an endless hunger and are capable of consuming huge amounts of food in short order.

It should be noted that trolls have disproportionately large heads and a significant bite attack to supplement their terrible claws in battle. Their jaws can open surprisingly wide, almost to unhinging. With no fear of injury, trolls will consume whatever sustenance looks like food — gobbling it down with little regard for table manners. One particular game known as "swine's toss" involves two or more trolls each tossing a boar's head up in the air to catch it in their gaping maws and swallow it straight into their stomachs. A troll who fails to catch and swallow his head is deemed the loser.

Stages of Life

How old can trolls live to be? No one can say for certain. Through the restorative powers of the bi-liver hormone, their bodily organs are constantly being renewed. There are no recorded cases of trolls

dying of old age, but their violent lifestyles make life expectancy hard to assess. Nevertheless, there are rare accounts of certain individuals living for several human generations, hiding deep in forgotten dungeons or lurking on the fringes of civilization to prey on unwary travelers.

Some varieties of troll hibernate. When food becomes scarce as in winter they will retreat into their lairs and sink into a deep sleep. Awakening a sleeping troll is folly, for a hibernating troll wakes with a ferocious appetite.

As trolls age they continue to gradually grow in size. An adult troll of threescore summers can achieve the huge size of a hill giant while retaining healthy vigor. Giant-sized trolls have been known to mate with giant-kind, producing offspring which as often as not possess no bi-liver. Such progeny are essentially giants. Those which inherit regenerative powers may gain the best of both parents, having also the more stable giant personality and intellect (such as it is). These rare exceptions can rise to positions of tribal leadership, becoming some of the famous "giant kings" of legend.

Sociology

After only one generation it became clear the trolls were able to breed true to their own. That is, any offspring born of a she-troll would inherit the bi-liver. Today, they are a race all their own.

Contrary to legend, trolls do not reproduce by tearing parts of their bodies off and scattering them about so each grows into its own troll. If a troll does suffer dismemberment, only that part that has a connection to the bi-liver will be able to continue regenerating. Severed limbs can be re-attached, if it is done within an hour, otherwise it will take a full day to re-grow an arm, leg or head.

According to one chronicler, *"Despite their cruelty in combat, trolls are surprisingly tender and kind to their own young. Female trolls work as a group, spending a great deal of time teaching young trolls to hunt and fend for themselves before sending them off to find their own territories."* Surprising though this may sound, other observers agree. A lone troll is typically male.

There have been stories of bands of trolls as large as twenty or forty, but such groups are always located in areas with plenty of food to satisfy so many hungering mouths. War bands gathered by some great general — whether giant or human — is another possible scenario.

Another example of a temporary gathering of trolls can be found in a secluded valley. Known as Trollmoot, it is located near a group of standing stones of ancient origin. The trolls gather during the Spring Equinox for a noisy festival. Locals know to avoid the area during Trollmoot. The meeting continues for a lunar month. Besides fertility rites, trolls compete in contests of strength and endurance. They also trade valuables, stories and what passes for culture among these creatures. Trolls seem to be mysteriously drawn to Trollmoot Valley. When a particularly successful adventuring party once purged the region of trolls, within a few years more trolls migrated to the site once again.

New Equipment

Over the centuries trolls have adapted their own preferred equipment. Their opponents have likewise designed items to help in the endless wars against them.

Glass Spearhead

A glass spearhead is designed to break upon a successful attack, delivering a dose of acid, poison or troll kill into the wound it creates. Each spearhead has a tiny steel tip atop a glass reservoir, which can be filled with any appropriate liquid. The spearhead then locks in place onto a specially made spear haft. Effective for only a single attack, the

spearhead can be removed and replaced as a move action. It has an AC of 13, 1 hit point, hardness 2 and a break DC of 13. On an attack roll of 1, the glass spearhead will shatter, wasting the contents. A glass spearhead reduces the damage of the spear to which it is attached by 2 steps (for example, a Medium shortspear's damage drops from 1d6 to 1d3; a Medium longspear drops from 1d8 to 1d4; etc.)

Cost 12 gp

Trollkill

Though it won't actually kill trolls, trollkill is a poison which prevents regeneration. Recent research into the bi-liver has led to the development of a toxin that, when absorbed through a wound, will render the regenerative organ dormant. A troll cannot recover from death if still under the effects of trollkill. Relatively easy to create, it requires a troll bi-liver from which eight doses may be rendered. The larger hydra bi-liver can produce up to four doses per head. Trollkill is poisonous to non-trolls.

Type poison, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 14 (20 for trolls)

Frequency 1/round for 2 rounds

Effect 1 Con damage; **Secondary Effect** halts regeneration for 10 rounds; **Cure** 1 save; **Cost:** 120 gp per dose

Troll Maul

(exotic, melee, two-handed)

Popular among trolls this heavy-handed, large sledgehammer is made to smash things. Though often made of low-quality iron, when more properly crafted it carries a heavy iron or steel double head. It is a martial weapon for trolls and an exotic weapon for other races. With a troll maul, you get a +2 bonus on Combat maneuver checks to sunder as well as a +2 bonus on attack rolls to break unattended objects.

Cost 18 gp; **Weight** 20 lbs.;

Damage 3d6 (L); **Critical** x3; **Type** bludgeoning

Feats

In the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, trolls have the feats Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, and Skill Focus (Perception). To create a variant monster, a GM may replace Intimidating Prowess with any one of the following: Catch Off Guard, Combat Reflexes, Improved Natural Attack, Power Attack, or Throw Anything. When doing so, move the six Intimidate skill ranks into other useful skills such as Acrobatics, Climb, Survival or Swim. Trolls with character levels can build on these feats (adding Cleave or Improved Sunder to Power Attack for example).

New Feats

Improved Regeneration

You regenerate at an accelerated rate.

Prerequisites: Regeneration bypassed by acid or fire.

Benefit: Your regeneration rate increases by +2.

Improved Rend (Combat)

Your rend attacks are especially effective.

Prerequisites: Rend attack.

Benefit: Doubles the number of dice rolled for rend damage. Add damage bonus one time. For trolls this means 2d6+7 rend damage.

Soul of the Hydra

You regenerate unbelievably fast.

Prerequisites: Improved Regeneration.

Benefit: You regenerate at twice the rate. For trolls this would equal 10 hit points per round. Additionally, if the head or limb is severed it grows back in 1d4 rounds.

Troll Combat Strategies

Trolls may not be bright but they are cunning. Their typical Intelligence of 6 is equal to that of ogres and nearly as good as orcs. They are aware of their superior strength and fortitude and will use it to their advantage. A troll's Strength gives him +5 to Climb checks. This enables trolls to pursue prey up trees and steep inclines and to make deadly ambushes from above. Even non-aquatic trolls

are good swimmers (+5 Swim). Hence they are excellent at ship-to-ship assault, diving into the water, swimming to the next ship, scaling up the hull and wreaking havoc on deck. There's no safety in climbing up the mast because a troll can follow. Locked doors and battened hatches are easily bashed open by a troll.

Trolls also do well with thrown weapons such as spears or javelins. A Large shortspear or Large javelin does 1d8+5 damage thrown by a troll and a javelin has a 30' range increment. Keep a few javelins handy for your trolls to deal with flying or other out of reach opponents.

Most PCs won't be expecting this tactic. Also a volley of javelins hurled at opponents followed by a charge is a great way to commence a combat.

Trolls are Large which makes them hard to maneuver in tight spaces but they also have reach. Trolls are great at blocking the advance of dangerous adventurers. Nobody but the stoutest front-line combatant wants to mess with a troll.

Trolls can slow down barbarians, cavaliers, fighters, monks, rangers and paladins but they know they are more effective against second-string combatants such as bards, clerics, druids, inquisitors and oracles. Alchemists, rogues, sorcerers, summoners, witches and wizards fear to be caught near them as a troll will quickly tear these lightly armored, low hit point characters to pieces. Trolls are intelligent enough to discern more vulnerable opponents and will seek these out when possible.

A troll will get up close to a line of combatants to get attacks of opportunity on any who try to move away.

A troll with the Combat Reflexes feat can do so twice a round (or more if he has a higher than normal dexterity).



Combat Reflexes allows attacks of opportunity even when you're flat-footed so maneuver-based characters like rogues with initiative won't be able to run past him without getting an unexpected attack of opportunity.

Trolls in cold environments will have adjusted skill ranks to include Acrobatics and Skill Focus (Acrobatics) feat. Trolls can devastate invading adventurers in slippery icy environments if they can stay on their feet while their opponents fall prone, where their powerful claws and rend attacks can be brought to bear (–4 AC penalty against melee attacks). Trolls mix with giants frequently and speak the Giant language, so frost giants attacked in their lair may blow a horn to summon aid from allied trolls. A troll attack from behind can crush would-be invaders like a hammer on an anvil.

A lone troll is helpless at negative hit points, but if he has comrades to engage opponents while he regenerates, in a few rounds he can re-join the fight. Thus a troll tends to prefer fighting with companions in order to make the best of his regenerative abilities.

Being highly resistant to disease and poisons trolls may pair up with poisonous creatures or lair in unhealthy environments. A cavern filled with toxic fumes or a disease-ridden refuse trench may not threaten a troll but may weaken his opponents before combat.

A troll may also pair up with gremlins, lamias, ogre magi, quicklings, rakshasas, sirens or vampires. The troll advances to deal direct damage and keep front line fighters busy while his companions harass with spells and supernatural abilities, in the same way a wizard may seek out and charm a troll to defend him or keep strong melee types busy while he concentrates on his other opponents. Other character classes that may willingly ally themselves with trolls include alchemists, clerics and even rogues. While the troll engages the enemy, the rogue moves in for a flank attack. A troll who has allied at some time with a rogue may have a level or two in rogue himself. Such a troll will often use his reach to sneak attack more opponents.

Scrag (aquatic trolls) have the advantage in watery environments, which preclude the use of fire that suspends their regeneration. Scrag will often lair in flooded dungeon environments. They prefer to have four feet or more of water in a subterranean cave giving them full regenerative ability plus full movement due to swimming (40 feet per round). Such semi-flooded rooms make movement difficult for standard land races giving scrag the advantage.

G'Mash the Troll King

Fully 13 feet tall, G'Mash the Mountain King, towers above other trolls and even some giants. Living in the cold mountains of the north, he is the largest of his clan. For years he ran through the arboreal forests fighting orcs and wyverns and hunting his favorite prey, humans. He defeated the frost giant Jarl Klemminjan the Cool, and took his magical armor for his own. Canny from his very birth, he has slain giants, dragons and rival troll chiefs through cunning, guile and ferocity. When on the offensive he favors making sudden surprise attacks. When defending he prefers to climb high in the mountains or forests he knows so well. Now leader of all the giants in the mountains, he is ready to rally them to war on valley borderlands.

GM Combat Notes

G'Mash is a tough opponent with character levels and magic items. Quick reflexes give him an extra attack of opportunity and his uncanny dodge eliminates flanks and sneak attacks.

Offensively his Eldritch Claws attack as magic and silver weapons. He will use his Power Attack –5/+10 if his opponents appear easy to hit. He will only use his magic spears if he needs to attack at range.

Among his animal friends is a pair of grizzly bears. They are usually lurking on a ledge above or in a nearby cave to come to the aid of their master, perhaps attacking his opponents from the rear. After a quick whistle from G'Mash assume a 70% chance of them arriving in 1d4 rounds.

New Magic Item: Chain Armor of Klemminjan the Cool

Aura strong enchantment; **CL** 15th
Slot armor; **Price** 36,510 gp; **Weight** 60 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This Huge +4 *fire resistant* (10) chain shirt is made of fine mithral links that seem to glisten with frost and smoky mist. Once per day the wearer can cause his hand to glow with a pale blue radiance. A melee touch attack deals 4d6 cold damage and causes the target to be staggered for 1 round (no saving throw). If the attack is a critical hit, the target is staggered for 1 minute instead.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *resist energy, frigid touch*†; **Cost** 18,430 gp
† *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*

G'MASH THE TROLL KING

CR 19

XP 204,800

Male advanced troll barbarian 7/ranger 7 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary* "Troll")

CE Huge humanoid (giant)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +21

AC 23, touch 7, flat-footed 22 (+8 armor, +1 Dex, +8 natural, –2 rage, –1 size)

hp 343 (6d8+66 plus 7d12+77 plus 7d10+77 plus 7); regeneration 10 (acid or fire)

Fort +26; **Ref** +10 (+2 vs. traps); **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2; **DR** 1/—; **Resist** acid 3, fire 10

Speed 45 ft.

Melee bite +27 (2d6+11), 2 claws +27 (2d6+11)

Ranged +1 spear +18 (3d6+10/x3)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks combat style (natural weapon), favored enemy (elves +2, humans +4), rage (25 rounds/day), rage powers (energy resistance: acid†, quick reflexes, swift foot +5 ft), rend (2 claws, 2d6+7)

Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

1st—*longstrider*

Str 29, **Dex** 12, **Con** 33, **Int** 15, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +18; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 38

Feats Eldritch Claws†, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Rend, Improved Regeneration, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Soul of the Hydra, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +11 (+15 when jumping), Appraise +7, Bluff +7, Climb +15, Craft (armor) +8, Escape Artist +8, Handle Animal +15, Heal +13, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +9, Knowledge (nature) +9, Linguistics +4, Perception +21, Ride +7, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +10, Stealth –1, Survival +13, Swim +14

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Languages Common, Giant, Orc

SQ fast movement, favored terrain (mountains +2), hunter's bond (hunting companions), track +3, wild empathy +8, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of blur, potion of haste, potion of magic circle against good*; **Other Gear** +1 spear, chain armor of Klemminjan the Cool, amulet of mighty fists +2, belt of giant strength +2, headband of mental prowess +4 (Cha and Int)

When not raging, G'Mash has the following stats:

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 24

hp 303

Fort +24; Will +8

Resist fire 10

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +25 (2d6+9), 2 claws +25 (2d6+9)

Str 25, **Con** 29

CMB +27; **CMD** 38

Skills Climb +13, Intimidate +27, Swim +12

† *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*

Other Treasure

In addition to the items listed above, G'Mash has the following treasure adorning his lair:

- Three crowns (collected over the years) worth 9,000 gp, 4,100 gp, and 1,700 gp respectively.
- Amongst a vast collection of cheaply cured hides are a number of valuable furs (ermine, fox, mink, and sable). Total value, 11,000 gp.

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